
***MANAGEMENT BRIEF** provides VA senior management
with a timely and concise summary of an
important HSR&D finding or publication.*

(Please forward this information to other interested parties)

Study examines antipsychotic prescribing practices

The November 2001 issue of *Psychiatric Services* will include an article about an HSR&D study that examined prescribing practices in 13 VA medical centers for veterans with schizophrenia, a chronic psychiatric disorder. Schizophrenia is the second most frequent VA discharge diagnosis. In FY99, nearly 20,000 patients with severe psychotic illnesses used VHA services with an average cost of more than \$44,000 per patient, per year. There are effective pharmacologic therapies for schizophrenia. However, while novel (or newer) agents are more efficacious and have a more favorable side effect profile than conventional antipsychotics, VA facilities have significant variation in prescribing rates for novel antipsychotics (i.e., risperidone, olanzapine, quetiapine).

This HSR&D project sought to determine whether patient sociodemographic factors were associated with receiving novel antipsychotic medications compared to those receiving conventional antipsychotics.

Investigators found that:

- There was a higher rate of novel antipsychotic prescribing than reported in other recent studies of patients hospitalized for schizophrenia.
- Caucasians were more likely to receive novel antipsychotics (54% vs. 40% for non-Caucasians).
- There was no significant difference found in marital status or gender between those who received novel antipsychotics and those who received conventional antipsychotics.
- Novel antipsychotic use varied significantly among facilities.
- Local organizational climates may have a profound effect on prescribing practices.

Thus, medication management practices for schizophrenia often are not guideline-concordant and may place patients at risk for adverse outcomes.

This study was conducted through the Mental Health Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) Coordinating Center. For more information regarding Mental Health QUERI, visit their web site at

<http://vaww.mentalhealth.med.va.gov/mhq>, or <http://www.mentalhealth.med.va.gov/mhq>.

Owen RR, Feng W, Thrush CR, Hudson TJ, Austen MA. "Practice Variation in Novel Antipsychotic Prescribing Among Thirteen Veterans Affairs Hospitals," *Psychiatric Services*, November 2001.

MANAGEMENT BRIEF is produced by the Management Decision and Research Center, a program within VA's Office of Research & Development, Health Services Research & Development Service. **Please take a moment to give us your thoughts and suggestions about Management Brief by sending us an e-mail at MDRC.Boston@med.va.gov.**